The Seed Sower.

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Moonlight.

The bluest grey, the greyest blue,
When golden gleaming stars are set;
A moon whose glorious yellow waves
Make fair the rippled rivulet.

Night has her curtains over all;
The first show dark against the sky:
The only sound is in the songs
Of a late nightingale close by.

The wooded walks which seem so sweet
Seen in the morning's fairy light,
Now, dim and shadowy, hold no charm,
Save the mysterious charm of night.

One swallow stirs, the gold stars fade,
In the cold sky a chill wind wakes;
The grey clouds frighten out the moon,
And thro' pale mist the new day breaks.

Good morn! good night! which is the best?
God grant, and some day I may find
Both true: Good morn to joy begun,
Good night to sorrow left behind.

How little of the sea can a child carry away in his hand! How little do I take away of that great sea—the boundless love of God!

The Martyrdom of Stephen:

A SERMON BY THE

REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

ACTS VII., 59, 60.

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

"And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

One of the pictures which Tintoret conceived most rapidly, and painted with passionate speed, is his picture of the Martyrdom of St. Stephen. It is in the great Church of St. George at Venice. Entirely ideal, it shares in the weakness which inevitably belonged to this artist's work when he was painting what was impossible. Not one of the stones which lie in hundreds round the kneeling figure of the martyr have touched him: he is absolutely unhurt. It would have suited Tintoret's character far more to have filled the air with a rain of stones, and to have sent the saint to the ground with a huge mass crashing on his shoulder. And he could have done this without erring against our sense of beauty, if he had chosen. But he was ordered otherwise; and we have now from his hand the spiritual idea of

Martyrdom, not the actual reality. The picture somewhat fails, as I have said, because he wished to do it otherwise; but the kneeling figure, with clasped hands and face upturned in ecstasy—its absolute forgetfulness of the wild cries and the violence of death, its rapturous consciousness of the glory which from the throne of God above strikes upon his face—is a concentration of all the thoughts which in many ages have collected round the idea of the sacrifice of life for the love of Truth conceived of as at one with the love of Christ. But this was not all that was represented on the canvas of this thoughtful and imaginative painter. Tintoret, who knew his Bible well, knew that Stephen had won his martyrdom by bold speaking, and that though he prayed for those who slew him, he had not been patient with their blindness to good. So there is in the whole picture a sense of triumph—the triumph and advance of Christianity. "Thanks be to God, who always giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." That is the note. The glorious group above in Heaven is dominant. One sees the future in the ecstatic rapture and triumph flashing from the face of Stephen, and the circle of the witnesses seated around in light seem to form an aureole round the dying figure. Not a stone, as I said, touches the martyr. Nothing is fairer, nothing more victorious than his face.

And in truth Stephen had won, even in his death, a great victory. He had brought a freer theology into the Christian Church, and enabled the whole mass of Jews who had Greek culture to enter the fold of Christ. In this he had prepared the way for St. Paul, and for the Gentiles. And the great painter felt this also, and places St. Paul in the centre of the background of the picture, and isolates him by clothing of special colour, so that his figure stands out conspicuously.

It is easy to see how a teaching which began deliberately to set aside Moses for Christ—which spoke of a continued revelation, gradually increasing in fulness from the beginning until now; which said to men, look to the present and not to the past for higher light, go not backwards but forwards—shook the very foundations of priestly teaching, and drove into rage Pharisee, Sadducee, and Scribe.

So they seized him and accused him of blasphemy, thinking their only chance was to get rid of him altogether. He denied the blasphemy in a masterly speech, saying, that he gave the highest honour to Moses and the Prophets and the Law; that they had received their work from God and done it, but that they pointed onward to One in whom that work was to be fulfilled and concentrated; that when the fulfilment came, men were bound to accept it and to put aside the former, not because it was not glorious in itself, but because a more glorious thing was now revealed. And then, in a burst of fine indignation, he turns upon his accusers—It is you who really scorn Law and Prophets, you, who are blind to their teaching, you, who, stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, have so long dwelt in the letter, that at last you have murdered Him in whom all the Law and Prophets were accomplished in spirit.

Cut to the heart by this impassioned rebuke, and by the faith and power with which he spoke, the madness of the fanatic awoke, and they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

And as he cried, there shone a light upon his face. It was no miraculous light; it was the sublime religious enthusiasm of the martyr for God and Truth which brought radiance as of an angel on his countenance. The Poet says, "God's glory smote him on the face." Let us rather say, that the God within him lit up his expression, the inward light of self-sacrifice transfigured the outward man. That which happened on the mount of transfiguration to Christ happened in a lesser degree to His servant here. That which happened to Stephen has happened often since, when in the hour of death the immortal strength of divine Love and Trust has conquered the pain and disgrace of dissolution, and the child of God has entered into his rest with so marvellous a light upon the face that men recognise in it a touch of something more divine than earth can show. We feel, indeed, that it is a message unto us, that in the rapture there we see the first gleam of the light which never was on sea or land—the first expansion of the soul into the freer life of God; the fleeting vision vouchsafed to us of the way in which the pure spirit shall glorify the new form which it will wear among its peers in the world to come.

The essential majesty of God was concentrated

in those words of Christ, when, in the fulfilment of the life of perfect sacrifice, He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." None can picture what the glory of Christ's face was when those words were spoken. The same thought, the same glory of God in the soul, was concentrated in Stephen, when, looking upon his Master in a vision, he followed His words and said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." No wonder, when the very life of God Himself came thus in expression to his servant's lips that his face shone with lovely light.

There is no beauty like that which perfect love felt within makes upon the countenance. That is the first point of the story. The second point is the triumph of the spirit of Christ over Force.

First, in the vision the Martyr saw. He beheld in trance the Son of Man, who had died the shamed death of the Cross, exalted at God's right hand. The profound conception which Stephen had formed of the meaning and triumph of Christ's life and death struck itself into form before his dying eyes. He saw love, meekness, sacrifice for truth, triumphant over the spirit of the world. In his case, the spirit of the world, sometimes exhibiting itself as cunning of intellect passing into fraud, sometimes as the force of arms or of gold, was shown as brute force. The mad animal rage of the fanatic Oriental, so terrible even in our own history, broke out against his life. "They gnashed upon him with their teeth."

On the one side was violence in its fury; on the other, one helpless man! What of him? Was he crushed, dismayed, conquered? Oh, no! He was not there at all. He had lost sight of the angry faces keen with the thirst of blood. He was far beyond the power of cruelty. The very place had vanished from his eyes. Serene and bright as one who weds his long-desired love, he met the Maiden, Death. Nay, he had passed beyond the grave already, and entered into the third Heaven, and got home to God. And there he saw One who, like him, had died the apparent victim of violence and bigotry, but who was now the conqueror of all the violence of the world. He saw Christ, the Son of Man, at the right hand of God. Mark the phrase—Son of Man—for it is here the declaration that the true Kinghood of Humanity is not attained by Force, but by Love, Righteousness, and Truth. To love men even to dying for them; to be righteous as our Father; to give up all for the sake of Truth—that is to conquer the Force of evil and of the world. We may be overthrown, humbled, degraded, ruined, done to death, but through all these things we are more than conquerors if we love, if we believe in God, if we are true to Jesus. It has been most fully declared in the death of Christ, and again and again in the deaths of all men, of whatever religion, who have sacrificed themselves for ideas and for love of mankind, that the true King of men is not he who is most cunning of intellect, nor most powerful by armies, but he who loves the most, he who is most true to Right. All these outward forces to which the world bows down, are doomed to extinction as masters of men. With Stephen, we may look forward to the far off time, when mankind, united with Christ, will subdue all things, even its own wayward will, by the power of meek and holy charity.

Therefore, he is a true Man, who, despising force, which seeks to prevent him doing right and speaking truth, submits to all things rather than deny the God within him, and in speech does not hesitate, and in action considers himself—if force seek to make him do the wrong, or deny the truth—as free, at least, to die, but not free to live the shamed life, which is hateful. On such a man the forces of the world have no power. No outward degradation can degrade him. He has learnt the glory of true manhood, and death perpetuates the grand tradition, and in his spirit, as in Stephen's, there is the glow of a stainless victory. The madness of the Pharisees went out in shame. The quiet obedience of Stephen passed into the being of the Church, and added steel to its blood. There is not one of us to-day who is not a nobler man through him.

(2) Moreover, Stephen felt he could give up his life easily, because he could not really die. Death was only a transition to life with the Life indeed. Among savage cries, and the rain of stones and curses, Stephen only saw Christ, and God his Father. "Lord Jesus," he said, "receive my spirit." There, with Christ his Master, he could have a home with God.

It seems but folly for us to speak of that; indeed, we half shrink from the phrase, "a home with God," for if we do not feel it profoundly it is hypocrisy, and if we do we scarcely

speak of it, since it is the secret and sacred thought of Christian Life. But to know that we are at one with perfect love, and truth, and purity, which in one of ourselves lived, and sorrowed, and rejoiced on earth; and in whom we find ourselves standing at God's right hand, is to have a power and a Presence with us, which idealizes all action, and adorns all suffering, and changes that hatred of death, which, as life goes on, crawls in upon our soul, into the patience of trust which makes Peace, and finally joy which can die triumphantly. Go where we will, we are at least sure that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us, until we are at one with the Father—even as He is. Children, ignorant, weak, we wander among unknown forces with an unknown before us; yet we dare to welcome death, not as the end of suffering, but as the voice which says to us, "Let there be Life—and there is Life."

This is the faith of immortal life with immortal love, which has given men, and which gives to us, not only the courage to suffer and conquer suffering—a courage that many have possessed without sharing our belief—but also an unspeakable rapture in the hour of death, a quiet knowledge that we are going home to perfect righteousness and perfect peace. Many persecutions strove to break that courage down after Stephen's death. But men and women stood unabashed and calm before the fire and the wild beasts, and the strength which was of Christ grew and prevailed, till the belief in immortal life was nourished into a veteran strength by a thousand deaths. But the outward courage and faith of the martyrs is repeated in the hidden courage and faith of millions who live and die unheeded by the world. There are martyrs of the heart, whose life has been wrecked; martyrs of slow disease; martyrs of disappointed hopes; martyrs of burdens so weary that one can only bear them day by day—in whom this faith has been so triumphant that one can only look on them with tears, and know not if the tears be those of infinite pity or infinite joy. They endure as seeing Him who is invisible. They do not speak much lest their heart should break; but they wait and watch, sailing in patience of hope to Christ, and God, and Home. These are the lives which shame our dainty troubles and make us feel our folly in complaint. But they inspire us also. We cannot see them without being humbled; we cannot see them without being kindled into aspiration. We know that this is victory.

Live, therefore, true to God, and the idea of God which He has given you to fulfil among men—witnesses for the truth as revealed by Christ. We complain, we fret, we hurry, we strive to make a figure in the world and chafe against our limits. Why should we make so much ado? We have an eternity before us. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Let us live firmly, quietly, trustfully, without the desire to push or make haste, yet with the constant desire to do with all our might whatever our hand findeth to do for the good of our fellow-men—not taking too much thought for the morrow—and our life will be victory at last. For having suffered patiently, and done nobly through the strength of God, we shall become at last what we have done and suffered—we shall reach and keep true Being.

Lastly, Stephen's triumph over Force was the triumph of forgiving Love. It is the very royalty of victory when love pours its rain of forgiveness upon the place where cruelty and wrong have stained our lives and washes out the stain. No nobler thing is known on earth than the soul which forgets and forgives an injury, or only remembers it to use it as a means of redeeming the guilty. For that is the magnificence of God's triumph over us. We refuse His love; we neglect His voice; we set aside His education. Unmoved, His love soars serene above our wrongs, and if it punishes, as it often must, punishes with the unwavering tenderness that regenerates our hearts, burning up all our chaff, and gathering, in the harvest of eternity, our wheat into His garner.

That was the glory of the victory of Christ. He loved men, and they scorned him. He thought for men, and they misunderstood him. They saw his goodness, and they called it devilish; they saw him seeking and saving the lost, and they killed him for it. But nothing could harden or embitter his divine heart. It is true the early enthusiasm of his love in his first sermon at Nazareth passed away, but it mellowed into the tried and profound affection of the man of sorrows, who bore our infirmities, and carried our sicknesses, and died for the truths in which the progress of mankind is contained. That was triumph. For what was cruelty or wrong to one

who transmuted them within himself into reasons for deeper love. They lost their force and perished, slain by victorious tenderness.

If any of you have suffered wrong, what is it to conquer the trouble of your life? Is it, think you, to grow hard, and bitter, and to end life with a sneer at those who can be taken in by mankind? That is a poor triumph. For you cease to hear in such a life the softening sound of the still sad music of Humanity; you lose, in scorn, the deep abiding interest of having in your heart, not the image of your own angry self, but the image of the passionate drama of the race in which you are lost and found again; you lose the sympathy which, in knitting you to the sorrow and love and joy and activity of other men, makes you forget your own personal wrong, and, in leading you to give yourself away, blesses you in giving. Yes—noble is his conquest and divine his triumph who extracts love from the thorns of life, and the power of consolation from pain; who turns injury into strength by forgiving it, and weaves out of hatred a web of charity. It is this, which, wherever it has been, subdues the world. So Stephen died, his last breath a prayer for those who pitilessly slew him. To that the world pays involuntary homage. It stands by and says—"Ah, how great, let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his."

Can we hope to equal that? We may, for we have the same Father and the same Master as the first martyr had. But we can only win the power in one way. We flatter ourselves that if a great forgiveness were needed, we could give it. But this divine nobleness of heart is not gained at a leap, in a moment, nor by those who cherish pride, scorn, and angry resentment in their souls. It is the last product of a long faithfulness to love in common life. He who cannot forgive a small injury, who cherishes resentment for little things, who will not forget a slight sarcasm in home or social life, will inevitably fail when a great forgiveness is demanded. He who would die with Stephen's prayer upon his lips must spread the Spirit of Christ over the whole of daily life, and watch unto loving kindness with all perseverance. For love is a habit, and we learn it letter by letter, slowly, till we are able to spell out the whole word; and the lesson which leads us on to express in life and death the full poem of a divine forgiveness is learnt in the every-day demands for charity, which home and social life and business make upon our long suffering.

It is a victory worth the effort it requires; the highest victory of all, for it outlasts the victory of Faith and Hope. It is bound up with the life of God in Christ in our hearts. To rejoice not in condemning, but in absolving, to forget the deepest wrong that man can inflict on us; and remembering only that the injurer is a child of God, to forgive him instantly—*that* is the last triumph of the Christian man, who would, in dying, see the vision of the Lord of Love, and say, in profound peace of heart—"Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit."

The Story of the Brontë Family.

An Address by L. P. Jacks.

In the year 1850 Charlotte Brontë was one of the most famous persons in England. She had become so in virtue of two novels which all the world was reading, "Jane Eyre," published in 1847, and "Shirley," published 1850. Competent judges, including Thackeray, George Henry Lewes, Miss Martineau, Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell, were ready to place the author of "Jane Eyre" in the very first rank of literature, and we who read these novels to-day, after a lapse of fifty years, are of the same opinion.

In that year, 1850, Charlotte Brontë made one of her very few visits to London. She came from a far away Yorkshire village near Bradford. Many wonderful sights were to be seen, and above all several famous personages were to be visited. Among these was Thackeray, who had been one of the first to recognise the extraordinary power and genius of the writer of "Jane Eyre." Thackeray's daughter has preserved the record of that visit. She tells that she, her sisters, and her father stood in the drawing-room one summer evening waiting for the arrival of their distinguished guest. "At last a carriage drove to the door, and presently two gentlemen entered the room leading between them a tiny, delicate, serious little lady, pale, with fair straight hair and steady eyes. She might be a little over thirty." She enters in mittens, in

silence, in seriousness, the hearts of the young Misses Thackeray beating in wild excitement. This then was the great authoress, whose real name and personality were known to a few persons only, some thinking that her books had been written by a man, some believing the great Thackeray himself was the author, some thinking one thing and some another. Thackeray's daughter goes on, "To say that we little girls had been given 'Jane Eyre' to read scarcely represents the facts; to say that we had taken it without leave, read bits here and read bits there, been carried away by an undreamed of and hitherto unimagined whirlwind into times, places, and things, all utterly absorbing and at the same time absolutely unintelligible to us, would more accurately describe our state of mind on that summer evening as we looked at 'Jane Eyre'—the great 'Jane Eyre'—the tiny little lady. The moment is so breathless that dinner comes as a relief, and we all smile as father stoops to offer his arm; for genius though she may be, Miss Brontë can hardly reach his elbow." After dinner came Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle and other guests. But Miss Brontë, alas, was unused to such occasions. She sat upon the sofa, she gazed round her with large timid eyes. The guests had come prepared to meet a fascinating talker, but the brilliant conversation came not. Instead of the brilliance which was to be the order of the evening, dulness and silence supervened. The great lioness turned out a shy, shrinking creature, more like a frightened bird than a consort for the king of beasts. The silence grew deeper, the lamp began to smoke, the misery of the party increased, and at last Thackeray, who was perfectly wretched, quietly slipped from the room, put on his hat, and walked away to his club.

And are we to-night likely to find Charlotte Brontë a more interesting personage than she proved herself to be in Thackeray's drawing room forty-seven years ago? When you have named her three great novels—"Jane Eyre," "Shirley," "Villette"—when you have told your friends that each of these is far superior to any English novel of recent times, when you have urged them to read these powerful fascinating stories, have you not said practically all there is to be said about that tiny little lady, with the shy manners, the speechless tongue?

At first it might seem even so. When you turn to the story of Charlotte Brontë's actual life, the first impression is of something sad, but quite commonplace in its sadness. The story of that life might be told in such a way, that the hearer would say—"Why tell us such a story as this? We have known a score of such in our own experience. There is hardly a street in Birmingham, hardly a road in Edgbaston, hardly a village on the smoky outskirts of this city from which you might not glean a bushel of life stories not materially different in their main elements from Charlotte Brontë's." Very pathetic, certainly, but the world is full of such things. The father of the family is a gifted, but unsuccessful clergyman, who held a cure of souls for forty years in a large manufacturing, and not altogether lovely, Yorkshire village. He marries a consumptive wife, by whom he has six children, five girls and one boy. The mother dies before the eldest child is ten. An aunt comes to keep house. The two eldest girls are sent to a charity boarding school, where they are half-starved and otherwise hardly ill-treated, and presently they come home to die. The survivors are all precocious book-devouring children, and when the day is done, the four gather round the kitchen fire and tell one another stories, and develope a wonderful talent for "making up." Charlotte, Emily, Anne, are the three girls, Branwell is the boy. At the age of ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, they have together written or composed stories and poems enough to stock a library, and so they grow up four short-sighted, pale, diminutive little souls, reserved in manners, and not very lovely in appearance. Of the four, Charlotte is the least unapproachable. Anne is a gentle, fine creature, with the pious look of a nun. Emily is a perfect sphinx; none can claim to be her friend. Branwell, the boy, is reputed to be wondrously clever, indeed, there are gounds for supposing that he is a genius. Together they form an odd, out of the way, constrained and somewhat mysterious group of human beings, gifted in mind, poor in purse, sickly in body. But among themselves round the kitchen fire at night there is no restraint. There the talk is fast and furious. Jests are then plentiful, especially at the expense of their father's curates, for whom the three girls are united in wholesale contempt. What kind of

jests they were will be readily understood by everyone who remembers the first chapter of "Shirley," After reading that chapter, with its very contemptuous picture of the curates, it will not surprise the student of human nature to learn that Charlotte ultimately married one of them.

It is needless to say that these frail, clever, little people were all this time fighting a hard battle with rigid poverty. No sooner had they any pretension to be grown up than the grim, familiar question arose, "what to do for a living." Branwell became a clerk at the railway station, which was then quite a new institution in England. Emily stayed at home to do the housework and take care of the father, who, though a generally estimable personage, does not seem to have had a very large faculty for making himself agreeable. Charlotte and Anne advertised for situations, as governess of course. I trust the lot of governesses in England has considerably improved since 1840. To be insulted and tormented by the children, to be spurned and trodden upon by their ignorant mother, to be subjected for years to endless humiliations, and to any refinement of cruelty, and at last, when worn out, to be flung away like an old shoe, turned adrift to die in the streets or the workhouse,—this seems to have been, if not the universal state of things, yet a very common one, when Charlotte and Anne chose their vocation. They got their situations and away they went, with their delicate frames and highly sensitive spirits, into that Inferno of humiliation and drudgery. Both Charlotte and Anne were spirits all compact of fire; they had restless intellects and vivid imaginations, and hearts which craved for freedom and joy and human love. It was not likely, therefore, that such souls would take kindly to the life which a hard destiny had assigned. They had various situations—some very bad ones, some fairly good, according to the standard of those times—but in all of them they were miserable, fretting like caged birds, but enduring all things, bearing all things, with admirable fortitude. At last Charlotte broke her bonds, scraped a little money together, and went to Brussels to study French; but Anne kept on at the mill. What Charlotte went through in Brussels is written down in Villette, written down too in letters of fire, and in an age like this, when it is said that nothing is written in fire except advertisements, I advise you to read it in her own words.

(*To be Continued.*)

Hymn.

O God, with trembling feet we press
Upon our Master's way;
Where he was certain, Lord, we guess,
Nor know the perfect day.

O speak to us, sweet inward voice,
As unto him of old;
And our rapt hearts as his rejoice
With Love as manifold.

Break in the darkness of our night,
Thou all-revealing Sun,
That we, too, walk in mystic light
With Thee, our God, at one.

But, if the gloom must linger still,
Wake faith's diviner fires;
Stir us by nobly strenuous wil
To do our hearts' desires.

O not in vain may human woe,
And wrong and suffering cry:
However dark the prospect show
We'll lift Love's banner high.

Yet, Lord, with eager soul we pray
To us Thyself unveil,
And on the loneliest Calvary way
Nor heart nor strength shall fail.

A. A. C.

I do not know any way so sure of making others happy as of being so one-self, to begin with. I do not mean that people are to be self-absorbed; but they are to drink in nature and life a little. From a genial, wisely-developed man good things radiate.

Do you know how to be miserable? Think about yourself; about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you; what people think of you; and then to you nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch; you will make sin and misery for yourself out of everything which God sends you. You will be as wretched as you choose on earth or in heaven either.

A Village Priest.

[Translated from the French].

There was a terrible fight going on a mile or two from the village of Hooties. The air resounded with the noise of the rifles: cannon awakened the echoes, and in the distance could be seen dark, heavy columns of smoke and powder.

The curè knelt before the altar, praying for his people. Around him, pale with fright, the villagers were begging God to protect them.

Two young lads, stealing from bush to bush and softly approaching the ranks, fired on the Prussians. "Fire two loads in pursuit!" said the officer.

Then a detachment of German soldiers galloped toward the village. There they arrested six of the inhabitants, the first they met, and took them before the mayor. "You are the highest in authority," said the commanding officer to this official. "I come, then, to tell you that some one has fired on his majesty's troops near your village. Being nearest to the scene of the crime, you are held responsible. You must hand over the guilty ones, or else six of the inhabitants of the village will be shot as an example. I will wait until to-morrow at eleven o'clock. The execution must take place at noon. In the meanwhile your village is under martial law, and I will guard the prisoners." It would be impossible to describe the feelings of the poor village people. The women uttered the most lamentable cries. The people met together, and it was resolved with sighs and tears to let fate decide who should be the victims by drawing lots. Those who had fired on the Germans did not belong to the community. They came from a distance, following the Prussian column.

The day was spent in discussion, lamentation, and sorrow. The mayor, the curé, and two old men, bent with the weight of more than eighty years, vainly begged the Prussian officer for mercy. The women came weeping. All was in vain.

The six unhappy men designated were delivered to him at five o'clock that evening, and confined in the hall of the schoolroom on the ground floor of the mayor's house. The Prussian officer authorised the curé to carry to the men consolations of religion. Their hands were tied behind their backs, and the same rope tied their legs together. They were so prostrated that they could scarcely understand what the curé said. Two of them had fainted. At one end of the line, with his head raised and his brow apparently unruffled, stood a man of about forty years of age, the father of five motherless children, whose only support he was. He wept over his children whom he was to leave to poverty, perhaps to starvation.

All the efforts of the curé were unable to bring peace to this crushed spirit. Finally, he went out, and walked slowly to the guard-house where the officer was quartered. The latter was smoking a large porcelain pipe. He continued to smoke, and listened to the curé without interrupting him.

"Captain," said the curé, "six hostages are in your hands who within a few hours are to be shot down. Not one of them has fired upon your troops. The guilty ones have escaped, and your intention is to give an example that will serve as a warning to the inhabitants of other localities. It makes little difference to you whether you shoot one or another: I would say, though, the better known the victim, the stronger would be the warning. So I come to ask you as a favour to let me take the place of a father whose death would leave five little children in misery. He and I are both innocent, but my death will be less regretted than his."

"Just as you please," said the officer.

Four soldiers led the curé to prison. He was tied hand and foot with the other victims. The peasant whose place he took, the father of the five children, embraced his benefactor.

We will not try to paint the anguish of that night. When daybreak came, the curé had revived the courage of his companions in misery.

The poor fellows, at first stupefied by fear, had now become at the voice of the priest, glorious martyrs, who were supported by Christian faith and the hope of a better life. At eleven o'clock a military escort halted at the door, and the prisoners were marched out. The curé at their head recited aloud the Office of the Dead. Along the road knelt the villagers, waiting to get a last look at their pastor. They had come to the place of execution, when a major in the

Prussian army, who happened to be passing with an order, stopped.

The sight of the priest attracted his attention. The captain explained. The major ordered the execution delayed, and reported to the general-in-chief. The general ordered the curé to be brought before him. The explanation was short.

The general was a noble-hearted man. He said to the curé: "Sir, I do not wish your death. Go, and tell your parishioners that for your sake I show mercy to them all."

When the curé was gone, the Prussian general said to the officers who had witnessed the scene,—

"If every Frenchman had a heart like this simple priest, we would not stay long on this side of the Rhine."

Whitherward?

III.

I have read with the deepest interest the essays of Mr. Jacks and Mr. Wood under this title, and gladly avail myself of the opportunity generously allowed me to add some remarks of my own, under the same head, in a magazine so thoughtful and stimulating as the *Seed Sower*. If what I have to say is largely in friendly criticism of the papers preceding my own, that is, perhaps, inevitable in the later members of the series.

Most heartily do I agree with Mr. Jacks when he lays it down that "It would be a strange thing indeed if the party of progress were to find itself in a position beyond which advance should be impossible," and that "a church whose watch-word is progress can never declare a *ne plus ultra* of theological speculation." Nor am I aware of any group among us who have "set out any form of faith as the final goal in which religious thought must end," and thus render themselves amenable to Mr. Jacks's suggestion that they are "trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds."

I agree with him, too, that it is interesting and important to study, not indeed merely in "a church whose motto is 'Progress,'" but in all phases of human thought, not only what is at a particular moment believed, but what are the *tendencies* of such belief. Belief should, like everything else, be studied dynamically as well as statically. The great principle of evolution applies here as elsewhere—to doctrines as much as to biological structures. We have not a perfect comprehension of a system of belief any more than of a star or a plant till we have inquired whence it has come and whither it is tending. Beliefs, like natural forms, are the subjects of development.

But there is this difference: you can observe a natural object, recognise that it is a member in an evolutionary chain, and possibly predict something about the characteristics of its progeny. But you cannot at the same time believe a theological proposition and believe that it will cease to be true to you after a time, giving place to such and such another theological proposition. We cannot get outside our own beliefs. If we come to the conclusion that in twenty years we shall have ceased to hold such and such an item of our philosophical creed, seen its falsity, and moved right away from it, we have already ceased to believe it. We may, indeed, be persuaded that what we now believe will lead on, under God's guidance, to larger and richer belief by and by *on the same lines*, but we cannot at the same time believe, for instance, that Dr. Martineau's philosophy of conscience is true, and that when we are older and wiser we shall see that it is not true. And so, when Mr. Jacks says that Dr. Martineau's form of Theism is the phase of thought in which most of our churches now are, I do not quite see how he expects these churches, believing this form of Theism to be true, to be ready to say "*what is to come next.*" It is, in fact, absurd to conceive a man holding definite religious opinions to be able to tell you what he will believe when he has ceased to hold those opinions. If he does hold them with real conviction, he expects to go on holding them always.

Do not let me be misunderstood. We are all conscious of the *incompleteness* of our religious convictions; though it is impossible for us to be conscious of their *falsity*. And it is open to us to ponder as to which of the dark places will be lighted up next, on what part of the area of our faith the revelation of the living God will next

strike. But that can be no more than a pondering and wondering. There can be no authoritative answer whatever till that light shine or that revelation come; and when that happens, the new, modified faith will already have taken possession of the soul. *No man can foresee the future developments of his own belief*, because whatever he foresees that he will believe, he believes already.

A religious belief that is incapable of progressive enlargement and development is undoubtedly false; but, however true a religious belief, the form of that enlargement and development must be hidden from the believer till it comes.

But Mr. Jacks lays it against Dr. Martineau's Theism that "no further theological progress *in that direction* is intellectually possible;" that "any advance beyond the position of the 'Seat of Authority' would involve the surrender of some element essential to a religious view of the universe;" that his theology "is of a nature which admits of no further development, and is to all intents and purposes final;" and that a young minister, who may be his disciple, occupies "an intellectual *cul de sac*,"—so that, if you are to go on at all, you must first go back to find a road that is not walled up.

I confess that this is to me one of the most extraordinary pronouncements that I have ever read. I am not sure whether, if I had met with this statement elsewhere, I should have taken it as a flout at Dr. Martineau's teaching or the most extravagant compliment that has ever been paid to him. From Mr. Jacks's pen it is, of course, neither the one nor the other, but a deliberate, responsible, and cultivated judgment. And I gather that here he has the concurrence of Mr. Wood.

But what does it mean? If it mean that the principles and methods of Dr. Martineau's philosophy will always hold good, of course those of us who are in any measure disciples of Dr. Martineau are of that opinion. But surely that is not an objection to a philosophy or a theology. Are we to go about looking for a theology the principles and methods of which will soon have to give way to others,—and that in the name of "progress?" The contention would be absurd. If, on the other hand, the enunciation of Mr. Jacks and Mr. Wood mean that Theism on the lines of Dr. Martineau is intrinsically incapable of further development, I can imagine no possible ground for such an allegation. Has, then, Dr. Martineau exhausted the theme of the Righteousness of God or the Love of God? Has he left no more for after generations to think, to feel, to say? Has he summed up God altogether? On the contrary, he has opened the door to a region of boundless expanse, left as a heritage to his successors illimitable fields of spiritual research.

Our friends seem to me to go wrong in their mode of regarding the progress which has led up to the Theism of Martineau. They think of it as a succession of negations, point after point of the orthodox creed having been dropped out of the area of belief. But these negations have been wholly secondary and accidental. The process has really been one of ever ascending affirmation, with ever wider view of the Divine Holiness and more vivid realisation of the communion of the soul with God. And to such a process there can be no limitation. It is not the end, but the beginning of an infinite progression.

I am surprised that Mr. Jacks should speak of "many distinguished pupils of Dr. Martineau whose intellectual views of religion remained unchanged during the course of a long ministry." I have known none such, though I have known many who, holding in their hands the precious clue which their great teacher had given them, have found by its aid an ever deepening richness of intellectual view.

I am no less surprised at the suggestion that, under Dr. Martineau's Theism, "the story of Jesus is only a fortunate episode in the religious history of the world." Dr. Martineau's philosophy leaves no loop-hole for "fortune" or chance in the history of man. The hand of God is everywhere behind every event and "episode;" and Jesus and his work are as directly the outcome of the divine purpose as biological evolution or the Solar system.

I conclude, then, that it is by no means necessary to sound an alarm, or to call us back the way we have come, that we may make a fresh start from the standpoint of say, Belsham, or Priestley, or Philip Henry. The line of development has steadily marked itself on the chart of our history through those names, and that of Channing, up to Martineau, and it still points bravely ahead. Religion has become ever a

richer and nobler element of life as we have pressed on along this golden path. Dr. Martineau has not barred the way to the thinkers of to-morrow: he has opened to them the great breezy common of a spiritual Theism, and leaves them to explore its glorious expanse with all its lovely play of light and shade. That exploration will not be completed to-morrow or the day after.

RICHARD A. ARMSTRONG.

Manchester College (Oxford) Letter.

FEBRUARY.

A somewhat prolonged experience of Oxford does not carry us back to a period of quite such miserable weather as that which we have been groaning—and coughing—under since our return to the classic town. Looking back over the past three weeks, we feel reminded of nothing so much as of the trans-Atlantic rhyme—

"First it hailed, and then it blew,
And then it friz, and then it snew;
And next there was a shower of rain,
And then it friz and snew again."

Here, it is true, the ingredient of rain has been represented in somewhat ampler proportions than in the foregoing soul-stirring composition. For days, indeed, it did nothing but pour, a brief frost in the natural, having turned out one in the metaphorical sense—alas, poor skaters! And now the floods are out, sailing is going on on Port Meadow, the view from Magdalen Bridge is suggestive of a new deluge, and a watery sky smiles doubtfully upon us in the intervals between fresh downpours. Catarrhs prosper splendidly in the atmosphere thus created; of its influence upon our studies—critical essays, &c.—it is too early to speak as yet, but we will report in a future letter.

Next term, all being well, will see the Library adorned with Warrington's splendid gift, the large window commemorating the days when Manchester College, Oxford, was the Warrington Academy, and students possibly of a severer type—not all of them, though, if tradition is to be credited—learned divinity and the classics, among other subjects, from their grave and reverend signiors. All praise to the liberality of the Warrington congregation, who in this manner desire to emphasise the historical connection between their own town and cause and the youngest of Oxford's Colleges. We, too, in looking upon the window—of whose beauty we hear glowing reports—shall feel, more than is sometimes possible in our new buildings, that we are not of yesterday, but have an ancestry and a past of which we may rightly be proud, and which we shall do well to live up to.

Concerning another long-expected addition to the College, progress is reported. The life-size statue of Dr. Martineau, which finally will find its fitting place in the Library, is, we hear, approaching completion, and will be among the exhibits in this year's Academy. No doubt when the College receives it, many of its old *alumni* and pupils of the great master of thought happily still with us, will make the unveiling ceremony the occasion of a visit to Oxford, thus at the same time attesting their admiration for the venerable ex-Principal of Manchester College.

We remember being told in past years by a then student of H. M. C. how that they produced all the preachers, while from M. N. C. proceeded a doleful procession of bores ("students" was the periphrasis)! Both statements are doubtless open to grave question; yet it must be admitted, with all due respect to our predecessors at M. N. C., that our reputation in the preaching line is not of the highest order. Those excellent people, then, who are of opinion that preachers are made, not born, will hear with satisfaction of the efforts now being made to remedy past defects.

When we heard at the beginning of the present session that Mr. Wood of Birmingham, was to be Tate Lecturer on Preaching, and that we were to spend three hours at a stretch with him weekly, the gravity of the situation was at once made plain, even to the most flippant. We had expected something new, something striking, something thorough; for we were truly conscious of our shortcomings, but never, in our humblest moments, had we conceived of a course so drastic. However, our fears were grounded in ignorance. We did not know Mr. Wood; and after the first meeting we looked forward with the greatest interest and pleasure to future lectures.

Last term our time was spent as follows: The first hour we listened to wise counsel, based on practical experience, on ministerial and pastoral topics. The second hour we spent in the Junior Common Room over tea and discussion of points arising out of, or suggested by, the lecture. The last hour we studied the sermons of great preachers—South, Jeremy Taylor, Newman, Henry Ward Beecher, Spurgeon, etc. Two were taken each week, students in rotation presenting short papers and analyses of typical sermons, with some account of the preacher.

This term our procedure has been varied. Mr. Wood lectures in the first hour as before. Three-quarters of an hour are then spent in the J. C. R., after which we pass into the chapel, where one student each week delivers a written sermon. At the close of the service, we assemble again in the lecture-room, and after an *extempore* address by another of our number, listen to Mr. Wood's criticism and suggestions, or write out a scheme for a sermon, on a set topic, "against time."

It must be remembered, too, that in addition to all this, we are being put through a series of elocutionary manœuvres weekly by Mr. Macdonald—a son of Dr. Macdonald, the preacher and novelist—who takes a fiendish delight in picking out our pet peculiarities, and under whom we have aforetime suffered the humiliating experience of learning how to breathe.

We leave these facts to speak for themselves. If the present students do not turn out modern Chrysostoms the default will surely not lie in the neglect of preaching as an art that can be taught.

The "Whitherward" articles now appearing in the *Seed Sower* have given rise to much running comment in the J. C. R. Mr. Wood came in for a little "heckling" on one occasion. For some time there have been those among us pulling "Whitherward," others with no less determination pulling elsewhither. The former are naturally delighted to find their views

endorsed by the *Seed Sower*, while the latter look forward with quiet satisfaction to this issue, when no doubt Mr. Armstrong will wield the sledge-hammer with no uncertain swing.

The Mission continues to prosper. The "Report and Account for the year 1896" has just been issued. In the Sunday school there is an average attendance of forty boys and girls. This includes a class of twelve elder lads, who also meet once a week for recreation. Religious services are conducted every Sunday evening by the students. There is an attendance of about thirty adults. A sewing class, in which girls are taught to make their own clothes, is held on Monday evenings by Mrs. and Miss Cotton, and is well attended. A women's meeting for reading and work, conducted by Mrs. Carpenter and Mrs. Raworth, takes place on Thursday afternoons; and in the evening of the same day a recreation class for the Sunday school children is much appreciated. We have made our third move in the year to a larger and more suitable house. A library of children's books is being formed. The mission may now be regarded as an established fact. There is joy in the heart of Miss J. Upton (superintendent), and in the hearts of all who have helped on the work in times of vicissitude. The mission, we are convinced, will become more and more adequate in the future to meet the superfluous energies of the students of Manchester College, Oxford, who are not much wanted in the provinces.

The children had their first treat at the beginning of this term. An excellent tea was provided, after which a concert was given, including a magic-lantern entertainment, songs, and readings. All were delighted.

The Oxford Y.M.C.A. arranged a special debate with us on the subject of permanent International Arbitration. This was held on February 3rd, when Professor Carpenter opened the discussion by moving a resolution in favour of an International Tribunal. Strangely enough, he met with little or no support from the members of the Y.M.C.A. Our own students spoke up for the cause of peace, and after a reply by Mr. Carpenter, the motion was carried by two votes.

The Martineau Club has met once. After dinner in a hall Professor Odgers gave us a paper on "Richard Frankland." It was at first thought of giving the club his name, and Mr. Odgers showed us that we should have honoured ourselves in so doing. At our second meeting this term the Master of Balliol will give a paper on "Christianity and the Historical Christ."

Here is a parcel of odds and ends to finish up with. We dine in hall at 1 p.m. instead of 7 p.m., a much more convenient and agreeable arrangement. We understand that the one still unfinished window in the chapel is promised, so we shall soon be perfect. A further improvement has been made in the chapel by removing one chandelier and raising the rest, which before interfered with the windows. We congratulate Mr. Anderton and Mr. Warschauer on their obtaining the Hibbert. Mr. Warschauer has been granted it for two years, and Mr. Anderton for one, to their mutual satisfaction. We hope this departure will establish a precedent. We are looking forward to Mr. Stopford Brooke as special preacher for two Sundays at the end of the term. At our debate we discussed the "Freedom of the Press." Mr. W. C. Hall opened. At our "Shakespeare" we read "King Lear." A levy made at the College for the Penrhyn strikers realized £3. One more item: Mr. W. C. Hall, Mr. Whitaker, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Maley, and Mr. Herford will be seeking pulpits at the close of the session.

The Rev. E. Myers, of Shrewsbury.

In our last issue it was our painful duty to record the death of the Rev. Edward Myers, F.G.S., minister of High Street Unitarian Church, which sad event took place at his residence, Claremont, Shrewsbury, on Saturday, January 16, at the age of 67. Our friend had been seriously ill for some weeks, suffering from an internal complaint, but after undergoing an operation he appeared to be fast improving until Saturday morning, when to the great grief of his many friends he suddenly expired. Mr. Myers was born in Lancashire in 1829, and was originally intended for the ministry of the Anglican Church, of which his father was a member; but quite early he was brought in contact with Dr. Martineau's ministry in Liverpool, and he afterwards gave up the idea of entering the Church of England, becoming instead an adherent of the Unitarian faith. His first charge was at the Walsall Unitarian Chapel in 1851, and in 1860 he was called to the honourable position of co-minister to the Rev. George Dawson, of Birmingham. It may here be remarked that Mr. Myers's twin brother is at present a priest of the Church of Rome, to which his mother also belonged. For nine years the deceased laboured in Birmingham, and while there he married Miss Thomas, whose father was one of the founders of George Dawson's Church, and she still survives him. On leaving Birmingham Mr. Myers removed to Wolverhampton, and in 1873 went to Shrewsbury to take charge of the High Street Church, which bears an honoured name in the history of Shrewsbury Nonconformity, and was once the worshipping place of the Darwins. Mr. Myers's work at High Street was of a very successful character. In 1885 the chapel was thoroughly renovated and decorated, and the front renewed at a cost of between £600 and £700. The building was re-opened by the late Dr. Crosskey, of Birmingham, on March 12th, 1885. Mr. Myers was a

follower of Charles Darwin, and a thorough believer in the theory of evolution. He was no mean artist, and it may not be generally known that he designed the tablet to the memory of Darwin which was erected in High Street Church—the only one in a place of worship, with the exception of the well-known tablet in Westminster Abbey.

Mr. Myers fully recognised the responsibilities of citizenship, and endeavoured to do his duty in that respect. For 12 years he was an active member of the Shrewsbury School Board, his connection with that body ceasing at the recent election. For a considerable period he officiated as a guardian of the Atcham Union. He was a Fellow of the Geographical Society, a member of the committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Society, and of the South Cheshire and District Sunday School Association. He was also an active member of the Shrewsbury Nonconformist Association; a member of the Shrewsbury Burial Board when that body was in existence; and up to the time of his death a member of the Shropshire Archæological Society, of the Caradoc Field Club, and of the Darwin Memorial Committee.

The funeral took place on Thursday, January 21st, amid manifestations of the greatest sympathy and respect. The first portion of the service was conducted in the High Street Church, which was filled by the friends and relatives of the deceased, the members of the congregation, and others. Among those present, either at the Church or the General Cemetery, were the Revs. T. Townsend, T. Hosking, W. Hinton Jones, J. J. Poynter (Oswestry), and F. Tinkler, the Rev. Frederick Myers (S.J.), Stonyhurst, Lancashire (brother); Rev. J. C. Street, Birmingham; Rev. G. Eyre Evans, Whitchurch; and the Rev. J. Morley Mills, Nantwich. The Rev. J. C. Street then delivered an address. He said there lay before them that day the remains of one of God's soldiers, a brave, true-hearted warrior, who, through a long campaign of five-and-forty years, never faltered in his allegiance, nor shrank from a post of danger, but was always at his duty, and was faithful unto death. This soldier caused no tears to flow, he smote no fellow-man in all his strife; but raised up the fallen, caused the "widow's heart to sing for joy," and was a "father to the fatherless." Their brother was a soldier of truth and righteousness. He never presumed to think that all God's truth had been revealed to him—that all others were in error, and that he alone was right; but he was heroic enough to stand by his truth in a minority, amid obloquy, and readily paid the penalty of social banishment and comparative penury. In every question which arose where righteousness was involved there could never be a doubt where he would be found. He had the true heart of a bold warrior for God, who might be smitten down, but who knew he could not be conquered or the right injured. He bore the scars of many an honourable wound, while, on the side of God, he fought for the welfare of his fellow man, and should not they pay him high honour as they bore his remains to the grave? For forty-five years he had been in the battlefield—twenty-three of them spent in Shrewsbury—and there at his post, amid the love of his people and with the respect of many against whom he had often to fight, he had fallen down to die, affirming in his last words that in life and in death he would be still with God. What could be more complete than that? He (the speaker) was not insensible of the great loss which had come upon her who had been his companion in life, nor of the trouble which had smitten the members of his little flock, nor did he forget how many there were in the town and throughout the Midlands who were regretting the citizen, the scholar, the gentleman; but he was most of all triumphing in their deceased brother's joy, and thanked God that such as he had lived and died. Such men as he uplifted our common humanity and threw a sweetness and glory about it. The fight was now o'er, but the dead lived, and in their hearts and lives he would have his living memorial.—The service ended with the playing of the "Dead March" in *Saul*.—The funeral *cortege* then proceeded to the Cemetery, where, at the open grave, the concluding portion of the service was gone through by the Rev. J. C. Street, who also delivered another brief address.

In Mr. Myers we have lost one of the most respected Ministers in the Midlands, who by his character, attainments, and work, magnified his office, and gave lustre to our cause. Our sympathies go out to his bereaved widow, and to the congregation over which he so long and faithfully presided.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Who Buried Cock Robin?

Among Mrs. Ewing's many charming stories, none is prettier than "Brothers of Pity," of which a solitary little boy is the hero. This little lad, being a lonely child, was in the habit of dipping into the grave books in his godfather's library, where he was allowed to play so long as he did not make a noise—which, however, he often did, as you may suppose.

In one big book, called "Religious Orders," he read about a band of good men, who, without receiving pay, made it their business to do deeds of mercy, such as tending the sick and dying, and burying the dead who were without friends. They always worked with their faces covered, and wrapped themselves up so as not to be recognised, thanked, or praised.

These benevolent men were named "Brothers of Pity." The little boy admired this conduct so much that he made himself a cloak out of black calico, bought a penny mask at the village shop, and determined to play at being a "Brother of Pity" himself.

Armed with a small spade he set out, and it was not long before he found plenty of work. Once a poor cat who had died of want and ill-usage, obtained a decent burial at his hands, and there was no lack of other small creatures—a mole, lots of frogs, and others who had "died without friends in the hedges."

Mrs. Ewing makes her small hero speak for himself thus: "One summer evening I went by myself after tea, into a steep little field at the back of our house, with an old stone quarry at the top, on the ledges of which, where the earth had settled, I used to play at making gardens. And there, lying on a bit of stony ground, half on the stones, and half on the grass, was a dead robin redbreast.

"I love robins very much, and it was not because I wanted one to die, but because I thought that if one did die, I should so like to 'bury him, that I had wished to find a dead robin ever since I became a 'Brother of Pity.' It was rather late, but it wanted nearly an hour to my usual bedtime, so I thought I would go home at once for my spade, and dress, and bier, and for some roses.

"For I had resolved to bury this (my first robin redbreast) in a grave lined with rose leaves, and to give him a wreath of forget-me-nots. Just as I was going I heard a loud buzz above my head, and something hit me in the face. It was a beetle whirring about in the air.

"And as I turned to leave poor robin, the beetle sat down on him, on the middle of his red breast, and by still hearing the buzzing, I found that another beetle was whirling and whirring just over my head in the air. I like beetles (especially flying watchmen), so I said, just for fun, 'You've got on your black things, and if you'll take care of the body till I get my spade, you shall be 'Brothers of Pity.'

"I ran home and I need not have gone indoors at all, for I keep my cloak and my spade and the bier in the summer-house, but the bits of wood were in the nursery cupboard, so, after I had got some really good roses, and was quite ready, I ran upstairs, and there to my great vexation, Nurse met me and said I was to go to bed."

SOME QUIET SEXTONS.

"I thought it was very hard, because it had been a very hot day, and I had had to go a long walk in the heat of the sun, along the old coaching-road with Nurse, and it seemed so provoking now it was cool and the moon rising, that I should have to go to bed.

"Especially as Nurse was sending me earlier than usual, because she wanted to go out herself, and I knew it. I tried to go to sleep, but I couldn't. Every time I opened my eyes the moonlight was more and more like daylight through the white blind. At last I thought I must have really been asleep without knowing it and that it must be morning.

"So I got out of bed and went to the window and peeped—but it was still moonlight, only moonlight as bright as day—and I saw Nurse and two of the maids just going through the upper gate into the park. In one moment I made up my mind. Nurse had only put me to bed to get me out of the way.

"I did not mean to trouble her, but I determined not to lose the chance of being a Brother of Pity to a robin redbreast. I dressed myself as well as I could, got out unobserved, and made my way to the summer-house. Things look a little paler by moonlight, otherwise I could see my way quite well.

"I put on my cloak, took my spade and the handle of the bier in my right hand, and holding the mask over my face with my left, I made my way to the quarry field. It was a lovely night, and as I strolled along I thought with myself, that the ground where robin lay was too stony for my spade, and that I must move him a little lower where some soft earth borders on one side of the quarry.

"I was as certain as I had ever been of anything that I did not think about this till then, but when I got to the quarry the body was gone from the place where I had found it; and when I looked lower down on the bit of soft earth, there lay robin just in the place where I was settling in my mind that I would bury him!

"I could not believe my eyes through the holes in my mask, so I pulled it off, but there was no doubt about the fact. There he lay; and round him, when I looked closer, I saw a ridge like a rampart of earth, which framed him neatly and evenly, as if he were already half-way into his grave.

"The moonlight was as clear as day, there was no mistake as to what I saw, and whilst I was looking the body of the bird began to sink by little jerks, as if some one were pulling it from below. When first it moved I thought that poor robin could not be dead after all, and that he was coming to life again like the flying watchman.

"But I soon saw that he was not, and that some one was pulling him down into a grave. When I felt quite sure of this, when I had rubbed my eyes to clear them, and pulled the lashes to see if I was awake, I was so horribly frightened, that with my mask in one hand, and the handle of my bier in the other, I ran home as fast as

my legs would carry me, leaving the roses and the cross and the blue velvet pall behind me in the quarry.

"Nurse was still out, and I crept back to bed without detection, where I dreamed of invisible grave-diggers all the night. I did not feel quite so much afraid by daylight, but I was not a bit less puzzled as to how Cock Robin had been moved from the stony place to the soft earth, and who dug his grave.

"I could not ask Nurse about it, for I should have had to tell her I had been out; but Godfather Gilpin never tells tales of me, and he knows everything, so I went to him. The more I thought of it the more I saw that the only way was to tell him everything, for if you tell only parts of things you sometimes find yourself telling lies before you know where you are.

"So I put on my cloak and my mask, and took the shovel and bier into the study, and sat down on the little footstool I always wait on when godfather Gilpin is in the middle of reading, and keeps his head down to show that he does not want to be disturbed.

"When he had shut up his book and looked at me he burst out laughing. I meant to have asked him why, but I was so busy afterwards that I forgot: I suppose it was the nose, for it had got rather broken when I fell down as I was burying the old drake that Neptune killed.

"But he was very kind to me, and I told him all about my being a 'Brother of Pity,' and how I wanted to bury a robin, and how I had found one, and how he had frightened me by burying himself.

WHAT GODFATHER GILPIN THOUGHT.

"'Some other Brother of Pity must have got hold of him,' said my godfather, laughing, 'and he must have got Jack the Giant Killer's cloak of darkness for *his* dress, so that you did not see him.' 'There was nobody there,' I earnestly answered, shaking my mask as I thought of the lonely moonlight; 'Nothing but two beetles, and I said that if they would take care of him they might be Brothers of Pity.'

"'They took you at your word,' said my godfather; 'take off your mask, which distracts me, and I will tell you who buried Cock Robin.' I knew when godfather Gilpin was really telling me things—without thinking of something else, I mean—and I listened with all my ears.

"'The beetles whom you very properly admitted into your brotherhood,' said my godfather, 'were sextons, or burying-beetles, as they are sometimes called. They bury animals of all sizes in a surprisingly short space of time. If two of them cannot conduct the funeral they summon others.

"'They carry the body if necessary to suitable ground; with their flat heads (for the sexton-beetle does not carry a spade) they dig trench below trench all round the body they are committing to the earth, after which they creep under it and pull it down, and they shovel away once more and so on, till it is deep enough in, and then they push the earth over it and tread it and pat it down neatly.'

"'Then it was the beetles who were burying the robin redbreast?' I gasped.

"'I suspect so,' said godfather Gilpin, 'but we will go and see.'

"He actually knocked down a book in his hurry to get his hat, and when I helped him to pick it up and said, 'Why, godfather, you're as bad as I was about Taylor's Sermons,' he said, 'I am an old fool, my dear, I used to be very fond of insects before I settled down to the work I am at now, and it excites me to go out into the fields again.'

"I never had a nicer walk, for he showed me lots of things I had never noticed before we got to the quarry field, and then I took him straight to the place where the bit of soft earth was, and there was nothing to be seen, and the earth was quite smooth and tidy.

"But when he poked with his stick the ground was very soft, and after he had poked a little we saw some nut-brown feathers, and we knew it was Robin's grave. And I said, 'Oh, don't poke any more, please, I wanted to bury him with rose leaves, but the beetles were dressed in black and I gave them leave.

"'And I think I'll put a cross over him, because I don't think it's untrue to show that he was buried by the Brothers of Pity.'

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One had Fortune's flag at her prow,
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Never a weather sign I scanned,
As my gay bark left the flowery land
On a merry morn of May.
Down swept a squall of Doubt and Chance,
And wrecked on the shoal of Circumstance,
My first fair venture lay.

Gravely I looked to rigging and rope,
Ere, bathed in the lustre of golden hope,
My next to the open bore.
But fierce and treacherous rose the waves,
More ships than mine found fathomless graves,
Ere the noontide storm was o'er.

To the lulling whispers of Art and Song,
I framed my last boat true and strong,
And decked her with joyous dreams.
And sent her forth with a rosy smile,
Tingeing her silken sails the while,
Caught from the sunset's gleams.

But oh, she never returned again,
O'er the wild waste water my sad eyes strain,
In the sickness of hope deferred.
And I think sometimes, should she yet come back
With the world's slow plaudits loud on her track,
Will the grass on my grave be stirred?

News from the Field.

MIDLAND CHRISTIAN UNION.—We beg to call the attention of our friends in the Midlands to the advertisement giving details of the annual services and meetings to be held on March 14th and 15th. The usual exchange of pulpits will be made on Sunday, March 14th, and the annual business meeting and sermon will be held at the Old Meeting Church on Monday, March 15th. The Old Meeting friends will provide dinner for ministers and delegates, and tea for all friends from the country. An evening meeting will be held at the Town Hall, to be addressed by Sir John Brunner, Mr. Blake Rogers, Q.C., Rev. R. A. Armstrong, Mrs. Osler, etc., etc. It is hoped that the plans for the Small Heath Church will be ready for this occasion, and that the Building Fund will be started. Our friends should make every effort to secure the success of these gatherings.

With the New Year many of our churches make up their balance sheets and hold their annual meetings. The reports of several have reached us, and we are glad to observe their encouraging tone. The Birmingham churches and missions appear to be in a thoroughly healthy condition. At the annual meeting of the CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, held on Wednesday, February 17th, an increasing attendance at the Sunday services was reported, with an enlarged membership roll and an improved subscription list. The OLD MEETING CHURCH held its annual meeting in January, and great satisfaction was expressed at the progress made during the year. The institutions of the church are carried on with vigour, and beyond the £1000 needed for church expenses, a large sum has been raised for benevolent objects. The reports of these churches are voluminous documents, telling of great activity in every direction. The NEWHALL HILL CHURCH has had a year of exceptional interest and vigour. The renovation of the chapel has been carried out with great spirit and in excellent taste, and we congratulate Mr. Charlesworth and his friends on having discharged the heavy bill. Our two missions, FAZELEY STREET and HURST STREET, are doing excellent work and were never more flourishing. Mr. Pipe, at Fazeley Street, is making a deep impression for good on the neighbourhood, where his labours, sympathy, and teaching are highly appreciated. The work done at Hurst Street, under the direction of Mr. Clarke, is truly herculean, and we doubt if there is a mission which can show such a record in the whole kingdom. In his report, presented at the annual meeting of subscribers, on February 8th, Mr. Clarke said that the past year might fairly be classed as among the most fruitful and genuinely successful in the history of the mission. In the case of one or two of their agencies there had been a slight falling off in point of numbers, but the majority had not only maintained their ground in numbers and usefulness, but had added to both, whilst some new ones of considerable value and importance had been brought into existence. The report then referred to the satisfactory position and progress of the chapel services, the junior Sunday-schools, the Sunday morning adult class, the Sunday afternoon adult class, the teachers' preparation class, and the physiography class, which latter showed the increased attendance of 142, the largest recorded in the history of the mission, 61 per cent. of whom passed the examination in connection with the Science and Art Department, as against 27 per cent. for the whole kingdom. Two students gained honours, one being placed second on the list for the whole kingdom. In this class they had now had the second man three times, and the first man once, on the successful list of students for the whole kingdom during the past six years. One of the students gained a national scholarship of £60 per annum, tenable for three years, and another obtained a Queen's prize valued at £2. The students of the mission had also been successful in the chemistry and experimental physics examinations, while upwards of 200 pupils had passed through the dress-cutting class during the year. The report of the Provident Society showed that the number of members at present on the books was 102, as against 100 at the end of last year. The income again showed a surplus over the expenditure, the amount being £37 6s. 11d. Upwards of £500 had been invested in a ground rent, owing to which all the surplus funds of the society were now believed to be safely and profitably invested. The accumulated fund showed an average of £18 2s. 6d. per head for each member insured for sick pay. The report afterwards went on to state that 1607 medical notes and 494 garments had been distributed during the year, as against 1475 medical notes and 2779 garments given in the preceding year. The amount disbursed in cash, medical notes, groceries, coals, etc., was £238 3s. 3d. The total cost of the relief given by the mission (apart from the associations for clothing destitute children and for distressed military veterans), including medical notes, garments, etc., might be roughly estimated at about £600. The report also gave interesting details relating to the work done in connection with the social gatherings, the recreation room, the cricket club, the magazine circulation, the library, the ladies' committee, the mothers' meetings, the sick and savings clubs, the Advice Bureau, the Police-aided Association for Clothing Destitute Children, the Distressed Military Veterans' Association, the Crippled Children's Union, etc., etc. This is an astonishing record, and is largely due to the wonderful vitality, the incessant activity, and the complete self-devotion of our friend and brother, Mr. Clarke.

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GOD & THE SOUL

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my legs would carry me, leaving the roses and the cross and the blue velvet pall behind me in the quarry.

"Nurse was still out, and I crept back to bed without detection, where I dreamed of invisible grave-diggers all the night. I did not feel quite so much afraid by daylight, but I was not a bit less puzzled as to how Cock Robin had been moved from the stony place to the soft earth, and who dug his grave.

"I could not ask Nurse about it, for I should have had to tell her I had been out; but Godfather Gilpin never tells tales of me, and he knows everything, so I went to him. The more I thought of it the more I saw that the only way was to tell him everything, for if you tell only parts of things you sometimes find yourself telling lies before you know where you are.

"So I put on my cloak and my mask, and took the shovel and bier into the study, and sat down on the little footstool I always wait on when godfather Gilpin is in the middle of reading, and keeps his head down to show that he does not want to be disturbed.

"When he had shut up his book and looked at me he burst out laughing. I meant to have asked him why, but I was so busy afterwards that I forgot: I suppose it was the nose, for it had got rather broken when I fell down as I was burying the old drake that Neptune killed.

"But he was very kind to me, and I told him all about my being a 'Brother of Pity,' and how I wanted to bury a robin, and how I had found one, and how he had frightened me by burying himself.

WHAT GODFATHER GILPIN THOUGHT.

"'Some other Brother of Pity must have got hold of him,' said my godfather, laughing, 'and he must have got Jack the Giant Killer's cloak of darkness for *his* dress, so that you did not see him.' 'There was nobody there,' I earnestly answered, shaking my mask as I thought of the lonely moonlight; 'Nothing but two beetles, and I said that if they would take care of him they might be Brothers of Pity.'

"'They took you at your word,' said my godfather; 'take off your mask, which distracts me, and I will tell you who buried Cock Robin.' I knew when godfather Gilpin was really telling me things—without thinking of something else, I mean—and I listened with all my ears.

"'The beetles whom you very properly admitted into your brotherhood,' said my godfather, 'were sextons, or burying-beetles, as they are sometimes called. They bury animals of all sizes in a surprisingly short space of time. If two of them cannot conduct the funeral they summon others.

"'They carry the body if necessary to suitable ground; with their flat heads (for the sexton-beetle does not carry a spade) they dig trench below trench all round the body they are committing to the earth, after which they creep under it and pull it down, and they shovel away once more and so on, till it is deep enough in, and then they push the earth over it and tread it and pat it down neatly.'

"'Then it was the beetles who were burying the robin redbreast?' I gasped.

"'I suspect so,' said godfather Gilpin, 'but we will go and see.'

"He actually knocked down a book in his hurry to get his hat, and when I helped him to pick it up and said, 'Why, godfather, you're as bad as I was about Taylor's Sermons,' he said, 'I am an old fool, my dear, I used to be very fond of insects before I settled down to the work I am at now, and it excites me to go out into the fields again.'

"I never had a nicer walk, for he showed me lots of things I had never noticed before we got to the quarry field, and then I took him straight to the place where the bit of soft earth was, and there was nothing to be seen, and the earth was quite smooth and tidy.

"But when he poked with his stick the ground was very soft, and after he had poked a little we saw some nut-brown feathers, and we knew it was Robin's grave. And I said, 'Oh, don't poke any more, please, I wanted to bury him with rose leaves, but the beetles were dressed in black and I gave them leave.

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Gleanings.

The thing which makes one man greater than another, the quality by which we ought to measure greatness, is the power of loving.

Missions are expensive, but they are not so costly to any church as the lack of them.

In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up that makes us rich.

If the heart be wrong nothing can be right.

People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy.

The sufferings of sin and selfishness are not the sufferings which win "the peace that passeth understanding." There are crowns of very real thorns which can never blossom into crowns of glory.

It is easier to oil the bolts than to force them when they are rusty.

It is possible to be doing something and yet to be very idle.

Praises of the unworthy are felt by ardent minds as robberies of the deserving.

When you see a man with a great deal of religion displayed in his shop window, you may be sure he keeps a very small stock within.

Men who would scruple to utter a lie do not hesitate to cherish a prejudice, forgetting that a prejudice is a standing falsehood.

If I wanted to finish an enemy, it should be by fastening on him the trouble of constantly hating somebody.

I will listen to any one's convictions; but pray keep your doubts to yourself. I have plenty of my own.

Wouldest thou pray within a temple?—pray within thyself.

The answer to prayer is slow; the force of prayer is cumulative. Not till life is over is the whole answer given, the whole strength it has brought, understood.

Fine sensibilities are like woodbines; delightful luxuries of beauty to twine round a solid upright stem of understanding; but, very poor things, if, unsustained by strength, they are left to creep along the ground.

Many people regard the Bible as an old ruin. They think there may be some chambers in it which might be made habitable, if it were worth the while; but they take it as a young heir takes his estate, who says, "I shall build me a modern house to live in, but I'll keep the old castle as a ruin;" and so they have some scientific or literary house to live in, and look upon the Bible only as a romantic relic of the past.

It is in vain for any one sect to expect ever to transform the free common of Christianity into its own private stockade. No two leaves are precisely alike. Still less are any two minds. They will always see truth from a different standpoint, and through a different atmosphere. The truth on any subject has hardly ever a perfectly simple outline, and only one face. It is almost always a many-faceted gem, a complex and irregular solid, and, like a mountain range, is generally too large for its whole figure to be comprehended in any one view. The inevitable result is that men have always differed, and will always differ, in their opinions upon all but the most simple things.

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